

## Day Two – Older people are a canopy of wisdom



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These wise words from [Francis Njuakom Nchij](#), from [CDVTA](#) – showing the power of advocacy and support to enable older peoples communities to mobilise and join together to change lives. Francis showed through his work in Cameroon, it has been possible to change the narrative about older people and that through sustained engagement and support, it is possible for older people to be seen as positive contributors to communities. The motivation for people coming together to work together to fight isolation, fight poverty and come together to challenge exclusion – in order to live fulfilled lives in dignity.

Most excitedly – from Francis and other speakers – solutions and best practices provide a theory of change that could be replicated in other developing countries. Professor Malcolm Johnson talked too about the potential for replicable projects that are both low cost and high impact. He talked with great passion about the very important work that he has been leading including the formation of Home Share and the highly successful Old Peoples Home for 4 Year Olds.

Tracey from Eden Communities provided a very powerful [narrative around loneliness](#) – and the essential elements of connections. She was very clear that if we allow loneliness to sustain, it will wreck existing communities and therefore we need to focus on a social world to enable communities to flourish. Eden Communities estimate that the cost of disconnected communities across the UK is £32 billion, with these costs falling across a wide range of public services including health, welfare provision and policing.

Delegate questions provided a valuable focus on the reality of loneliness within families. It was clear from this discussion that there should not be assumptions about who, when and how people will become lonely. One of the speakers described the need for all of us to get engaged with communities, to enable older people to reclaim their life experiences – as right now our attitudes are making those experiences redundant, and if we don't reanimate people – and give them back their agency – we will generate vast quantities of lonely older people – and we don't have too.

It is also important that the future focus of ageing takes on-board technology. Stephen Johnston, the co-founder of Aging 2.0, a world-wide network that supports innovators that are taking on the biggest challenges and opportunities in ageing, talked about [harnessing the power](#) of these innovators.

So how to address these challenges posed about the future of ageing and communities? The afternoon of the conference provided some very practical focused events which strengthen our ability to work together to make the changes we want to see happen.

Firstly, we held the opening session for the second round of NCF Rising Stars, whose presence at the conference was once again supported by [Carterwood](#). We brought together our new cohort who will spend the next year coming together virtually or in person to think about leadership and change and will be instrumental in shaping the future of social care. They had a really fantastic start to their journey, with their opening session hosted by [Apetito](#) in their bespoke popup restaurant, where they met with the programme mentors and then went on to have the opportunity to hear a truly international perspective throughout the conference.

Running at the same time was the first meeting of the intergenerational expert reference group. This group was brought together to build on the many great innovations in intergenerational working that are beginning to emerge across the care sector. You can read more about these exciting new ideas in my recent article for Driven by Health which can be found [here](#).

In addition, we held the inaugural leaders' forum, which brought together over 30 leaders from across the globe, this provided a unique opportunity to get together so many people in senior positions, and gave us an opportunity to talk about opportunities for collective action including:

- How can we influence our government – so they hear the language of age
- Language and terminology – need to define and develop a common understanding of what we mean by the phrases we have used in the last 24 hours – age, care, - need a commonality
- Combined challenges of workforce – all experiencing in different ways in different parts of the world. What do we mean by technology – could there be a positive message for technology.
- Ways to support one another – as bodies and organisations – workers across the world who are supporting people at their point of vulnerability

The final window into the future saw the conference showcase the recent winners of the [Care Innovation Challenge](#). This innovative challenge had been put together by a partnership between [Oomph](#), [the Care Workers Charity](#) and [Bran Investment](#). They had attracted a wide range of university students to come together in teams to address some of the key challenges affecting our ageing populations and care provision. The results, in a very short space of time, were inspiring – as was the enthusiasm and passion from these young people who had suddenly understood both the challenges, but most importantly the key opportunities that exist in the future of care.

At the end of this second enriching day, it seems clear to me that the canopy of wisdom that Francis referred presides over an inspiring, imaginative and committed set of policy makers, care providers and leaders for now and the future.